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Report to Legislation Committee.

Annual Convention - Association  
of Municipalities of Ontario.

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**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**BY**

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**ON THEIR ATTENDANCE AT**

**THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF**

**THE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO**

**HELD AUGUST 21ST - 24TH, 1983**

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## **PREFACE**

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario is an umbrella organization representing the overwhelming majority of municipalities in this province. The purpose of the organization is to keep abreast of issues and activities affecting the welfare and good government of the towns, villages and cities in the province.

The Association sponsors seminars during the year on various pertinent issues. During the annual conference the Association will receive and deal with many resolutions that have been submitted by its member municipalities during the year.

In order to carry out its activities, the member municipalities contribute a per capita fee to the organization which helps to pay for its various activities. The Provincial Government also provides a grant to the Association. The Association elects and appoints its Board of Directors from among its membership.

The major thrust of the Association is to lobby and present a collective voice to the Provincial Government regarding the various concerns of its membership. The conference dealt with a wide variety of issues and resolutions as well as holding various workshops on selected topics. Rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive report on the conference, we will just highlight various issues and aspects of the conference that may be of interest to Members of Council.





### **ASSOCIATION BUSINESS**

The conference commenced on Monday morning with the first part of the conference dealing with the past year's work of A.M.O. regarding the administration and business of the organization. The elections and nominations of various offices of A.M.O. took place (and various constitutional amendments took place).

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**Claude Bennett**, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mr. Bennett complimented A.M.O. for its work over the past year. He indicated that tough decisions had to be made during this period of difficult times and he believes those decisions were in fact made. He talked about some of the activities his Ministry has been involved in over the past year. Rather than going in depth on his remarks, we will just list some of the points Mr. Bennett made:

- a new planning act
- co-operation between his Ministry and A.M.O.
- the good work that he and his Ministry are doing regarding housing, regardless of what the newspapers were saying
- a change to provide family housing in the rent geared to income percentage from 25% to 35%
- unconditional grants
- a revitalization program for downtown cores called P.R.I.D.E.
- the arbitration process regarding Police and Fire Departments

He summarized his speech by saying that he has faith in the democratic process and





that it will continue to work to the benefit of people. It should be noted, however, that the Minister did not remain to answer questions from the delegates on the floor of the convention.

Alderman Hinkley attempted to ask the Minister about his concept of the democratic process in regards to election of regional chairman, but because Mr. Bennett was unwilling to answer questions, the question could not be put.

### WORKSHOPS

#### CAN AND SHOULD MUNICIPAL BY-LAWS CONTROL HUMAN BEHAVIOUR?

This workshop was jammed packed and the room was overflowing and extra chairs had to be set up in the workshop and outside in the hallway. All speakers in one way or another said that municipal by-laws should control certain types of human behaviour but municipalities do not always have the legislative authority to do so. This is often unfortunate because local government in many cases is best suited to control human behaviour. The discussions that ensued were generally very free-wheeling and a consensus of opinion seemed to be reached in that if the necessary legislative authority was given to municipalities a better job would result in control of unacceptable human behaviour. Examples were given related to adult entertainment parlours, video machines, body rub parlours and porno magazines.





## UPDATE ON INTEGRATION

Various panelists from the Social Service sector in the provincial and municipal fields sat on this panel. The subject under discussion was the integration projects regarding G.W.A and F.B.A. It was indicated that nine projects are underway in various municipalities. In general terms, the projects seem to be proving successful although definitive analysis has yet to be made. One member of the panel who is also a member of the integration monitoring committee indicated that A.M.O.'s involvement in monitoring the integration project does not mean support of the projects. Some of the problems identified so far in the various integration projects, are:

- do municipalities have the right to choose provincial staff or must they accept the deadwood?
- the cost-sharing for daycare remains at 20/80 percent in the face of increasing daycare demand because of integration
- will there be assurances that integration will not be imposed upon municipalities (so far no assurance has been given)
- will municipalities have the right to de-integrate

The above points and others were raised as matters of concern, and various points of discussion were raised. It would appear that further examination and reports as the projects proceed will have to be necessary in order to fully determine if the integration projects are successful.





## GENERAL SESSIONS

### MONOPOLY MEDIA AND THE COMMUNITY

This presentation was given by Peter Desbarats, Dean of the School of Journalism, University of Western Ontario. Mr. Desbarats spoke almost entirely about the Kent Commission and monopoly control of the Press. He indicated that 58% of the Press is owned by the Southam Chain. He said the Kent Commission's investigation and recommendations were most timely and welcome. Welcome, that is, for the general public, but extremely unwelcome by the publishers. He said the publishers were very secretive and resentful of the investigations and most journalists were very reluctant to report and criticize their employers. He indicated that the large and powerful magnates, like Thompson, show the massive control they have over the media plus many other sectors of the economy. He spoke about the very real dangers of freedom of the Press through corporate control. He said many newspaper owners have attempted to vilify Tom Kent because of the Commission's findings. Mr. Desbarats said, however, that the Kent Commission have identified several very serious problems. He talked about various citizen revolts against newspapers and the quality of their reporting. He also talked about those rare journalists who have stood up to their employers on behalf of freedom of the Press. He indicated that if you don't have a free Press you have a controlled Press. The question remains "is controlled by whom?" At the present time our corporations control the media but the media magnates refuse to discuss the dangers of this control but instead prefer to deflect criticism by having the public focus on fear of government control of the Press. Mr. Desbarats indicated that one of the strongest recommendations of the Kent Commission was to establish local community review committees so that citizens, companies or organizations could have an opportunity to complain about





treatment received at the hands of the media. The Review Committee would receive complaints and make public recommendations. At this point in time the local community review committees have not been set up.

### BLUEPRINT FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT

The speaker at this session was the Honourable Andrew Brandt, Minister of the Environment. Mr. Brandt started his presentation ten minutes late because of extra convention business that overlapped into his scheduled address.

For the first fifteen minutes his speech consisted of too many jokes. For the next ten minutes he talked about his role on municipal council and his understanding of the problems. He indicated that he wants to keep his door open and that he would always be accessible.

After twenty-five minutes of listening to jokes and how co-operative everybody is going to be, his time was more than totally expended. The presentation which was given has already been provided to all Members of City Council and Regional Council in much greater depth at the various committee meetings. To repeat the presentation in this report would be redundant.





A.M.O. RESPONSE TO THE PROVINCIAL DISCUSSION PAPER ON MUNICIPAL COST-SHARING AND UNCONDITIONAL GRANTS.

The cost-sharing formula for municipal grants is, in a word, totally convoluted and if anyone understands how the system works, it was obviously not evident at the conference. Members of the Finance Committee will recall our discussion on unconditional grants and the difficulty in understanding the formula. The general session did nothing more to clarify this very complicated issue. The end result of the general session and the resolution pertaining to unconditional grants was tabled so that various municipalities may respond further to A.M.O.'s policy paper. This policy paper has already been provided to the City Treasurer for analysis as to the A.M.O. formula and its impact upon the City of Hamilton. At this point in time it may be more appropriate to await Mr. McFarland's report on this matter at which time we hope some of us will be able to understand how this system works.

MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROVIDING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Several resolutions have been circulating around the province over the past year regarding the impact that greatly increased general welfare assistance caseloads have had on municipal finances. G.W.A. is a mandatory program that municipalities cannot avoid and are therefore responsible to meet 20% of the demands. Because of increasing caseloads, costs have risen substantially over the last two years. Various municipalities have been calling upon the Provincial Government to pay 100% of the cost of G.W.A. A resolution that was put forth was adopted virtually unanimously by the convention. The resolution is as follows:





That the Federal and Provincial Governments share mandatory program costs for welfare assistance at the rate of 100%;

And furthermore, that the Provincial Government increase its share for all permissive program costs under the General Welfare Assistance Act; the municipal share not to exceed 20% of the total of such permissive program costs;

And furthermore, that the Provincial Government increase its share for all administration costs under the General Welfare Assistance Act; the municipal share not to exceed 20% of the total of such costs, and that administration costs encompass all operating costs, including rent, telephone, purchase of service and financing costs.

### RESOLUTIONS

At various times during the convention the delegates dealt with a myriad of resolutions. Most of the resolutions were rather tame and dealt primarily with financial aspects of running municipalities. The main resolutions have already been referred to in this report. We cannot really see any resolution that caused much controversy or division on the floor of the Convention. The only one that did receive a debate outlining pro's and con's related to the railways' responsibility for reimbursing municipalities for the cost of fighting fires along railway lines. One municipality suggested that we initiate a class action suit against the railways to force them to reimburse municipalities for this cost. In the end, the resolution was defeated.





### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the City of Hamilton place a formal bid before the A.M.O. Executive to hold the 1986 convention in Hamilton.

NOTE: Apparently the City of Ottawa will be bidding for the 1985 conference. It should be noted that the A.M.O. Conference has always been held in Toronto and has yet to move from municipality to municipality. Should Ottawa be successful for the 1985 conference, we will have a strong case to bring the 1986 conference to Hamilton.

2. That the City of Hamilton write a letter to the A.M.O. Board of Directors requesting that when the 1984 conference agenda is arranged, that the various Ministers who address the conference be informed that they will be requested to remain for 10 - 15 minutes to answer questions from the floor.
3. That the City of Hamilton write a letter to the A.M.O. Board of Directors requesting that the organizers for the 1984 conference invite the Leaders of the Opposition Parties to address A.M.O. in order to receive a balanced perspective on provincial policy as it affects municipalities.
4. That the Director of Community Development be directed to immediately investigate the P.R.I.D.E. program and report to the Planning and Development Committee on the possible benefits to the City of Hamilton regarding possible funding for any of the commercial strips in Hamilton. (eg. Downtown, Barton Street Concession, James Street North, etc.)





5. That the City Council of Hamilton request the Social Planning and Research Council to examine the feasibility of setting up a local citizens review committee composed of representative sectors of the community to receive, comment and make recommendations on complaints regarding the conduct, reporting and behaviour of the local media.

### OBSERVATIONS

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario is by definition a key power group in the province, representing as it does the voting public at the most immediate of the government levels. While A.M.O. is therefore a very important organization for the provincial government (one need only observe the cabinet ministers, displays, staffers and hospitality suites) the attitude of the provincial government is frequently mixed with parochial affection backed up by slick public relations. The delegates frequently appear in the role of audience at a command performance.

Yet one cannot fail to sense the real power of A.M.O., even if its expression is glimpsed only briefly or felt as mere potential. If the City of Hamilton is to take real advantage of A.M.O. as a further line of access to the decision makers at Queen's Park, then it is clear that we must work with other like minded municipal councils over the long haul, rather than just at the convention. Obviously, a provincial government that constantly ignores the collective voice and will of municipalities would not be long destined to survive, and our provincial government has a well deserved reputation for shrewdness and survival.

To realize the full potential of A.M.O. we must therefore make sure that our resolutions of province-wide interest or significance are circulated widely, immediately





upon passage, and supported through our network of growing contacts in other municipalities. We must also challenge our sister municipalities to elect to A.M.O. offices, councillors with a grasp of what might be rather than what has been.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it would appear that should the City of Hamilton want to affect provincial policy, that the government responds to a collective voice such as A.M.O. if they respond at all. Individual municipality's attempts to lobby and affect government policy would appear to be virtually impossible.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Members of Council who supported paying our registration fee for the conference.

Attached to this report is an article that appeared in the Globe and Mail dated August 29th, 1983, which summarizes the conference activities. It is unfortunate that we could not include clippings from the Spectator, as they saw fit not to cover the conference. However, an editorial did appear in the Spectator which in many ways resembles the Globe article.





# Getting no respect is familiar lament for municipalities

*Globe & Mail*  
*Aug. 29/83*

By ALDEN BAKER

If ever there was a suitable spokesman for municipal government in Ontario, it is a U.S. comedian who made a career out of his often quoted line, "I can't get no respect."

Rodney Dangerfield couldn't help but have sympathy for municipal leaders from across the province. Last week, they made their annual pilgrimage to Toronto to grumble about their lot as the water carriers for the federal and provincial governments in the provision of services.

"The senior governments can't continue to transfer costs and programs to municipal government if it is not accompanied by decision-making authority and adequate funding," declared Marlene Catterall, an Ottawa alderman who is the newly elected president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The association is the voice of more than 600 Ontario municipalities.

For years, municipalities have been trying to gain equal status with the two senior governments when it comes to drafting federal or provincial legislation that will have impact on both rural and urban communities.

Civic leaders complained throughout the three-day conference about decisions made by provincial ministries without regard to municipal input.

Municipal officials often sense a condescending attitude on the part of federal and provincial officials. They feel the senior levels of government view municipalities as suited only to fill potholes and open playgrounds. But when it comes to the big decisions affecting a community, let those at the grassroots wait on Ottawa or Queen's Park.

Municipal government has not been allowed to forget that it is only a creature of the province — the province can do what it wishes with one or any number of municipalities.

For years, the municipalities have been trying to gain access to a source of revenue that would assure them of long-term financial stability instead of having to rely on the ups and downs of provincial grants. Mrs. Catterall says municipalities will not be satisfied with anything less than a formal agreement providing them with a direct share of income tax.

Claude Bennett, Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, admitted to the civic leaders that "confusion surrounds the provincial grants program." He couldn't help but remind the civic representatives that the province had expanded the civic term of office from two to three years. The longer term of office means less frequent civic elections and therefore is less costly to those in office. It also makes it more difficult for defeated candidates to be remembered three years later.

To Mr. Bennett it means that with the added year the civic leaders have more time to put their plans into place. Municipal politicians had complained that two years was not enough time for them to carry out their policies.

"The year 1984 will be a year in which to take some political chances, because there will be time to prove you're right before you face another election," he told the AMO conference.

The granting of a three-year civic term of office by the province is not going to still the demands of municipal leaders for greater consultation and a new financial deal. Nor will the announced increased aid for non-profit housing for needy families, in particular the handicapped, and the decision of the province to meet 90 per cent of the cost of welfare when more than 4 per cent of a community's population is on welfare.

Municipal leaders want an early response from the province on the provision of ironclad legislation which would prevent business establishments from avoiding the payment of business taxes which represent 11 per cent of the total annual revenue. They also want provincial guidelines which would force arbitrators to take into account local community economic conditions when ruling on the wages of police and firemen.

Municipal politicians are feeling the heat from property taxpayers as the cost of education, social services, health and policing continue to rise and the province moves toward a phasing out of public-sector wage restraint. Unless the province is willing to give municipalities access to a source of revenue that grows with inflation, consideration may have to be given to the two senior governments financing the full cost of mandatory education and welfare services.











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